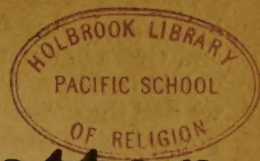


# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
J. H. OLDHAM



No. 101

OCTOBER 1ST, 1941

DEAR MEMBER,

That the feeling of the incalculable significance of the participation of Russia in the war, of which I wrote last week, is shared by our friends in America is shown by an editorial article in *Christianity and Crisis*, the broadsheet edited by Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr.<sup>1</sup>

## THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF PEOPLES

Its theme is the inescapable dependence of the peoples of the world on one another, for good or for evil. If some elemental, unspoiled quality in the Russian people—their robust will to live—had not moved them to offer to German aggression an uncompromising resistance, and if even now Germany were to succeed in crushing that resistance, the Nazis would obtain control of resources that might enable them to prolong the war indefinitely. The fact of Russian resistance must therefore deeply affect our prayers—the prayers, that is to say, of those who both know that the ultimate values of men's life are independent of the fate of nations and believe at the same time that there are values of civilisation to save which no sacrifice is too great. We shall find ourselves driven more and more to give thanks to God for “the residual health of these godless Russians.” And along with this note of gratitude, there will enter into our prayers “a holy sense of the unity of the human family.” Isolationism is a denial of the nature of things. The future of the American people depends, beyond their will, desire and contriving on what happens in Russia; and the fate of the peoples of Europe, including that of millions of oppressed Germans, and it may be also the fate of Asia, depend on American choice and action. We cannot, even if we will, extricate ourselves from the guilt of the world, and technical civilisation has in our time so extended and drawn closer the mutual interdependence of peoples that humanity must learn the way of brotherhood or perish.

## A LEAD FROM MANCHESTER

The striking manifesto recently issued by the Lord Mayor of Manchester and the Mayors of Salford and Stretford has rightly attracted wide attention. A resolution giving full support to the manifesto was proposed by the Vice-Chancellor of the University and unanimously passed at a meeting of about a hundred of the leading citizens of Manchester called by the Lord Mayor. The manifesto has force and freshness, and it is excellent that so definite a lead should be given by one of our chief cities.

The manifesto declared that, while the homes, the cathedrals and churches, the university and schools, the factories and warehouses of a famous city, known for a hundred years throughout the world, have been damaged or destroyed by war, the spirit of its people has never been higher. The destruction, the evidences of which are seen on every hand, is an obligation to plan and to build a nobler civic and national and international life. But it must be clearly recognised that civilisation depends upon sincerity of purpose in politics, in business, and in home life, and that to build on any other foundation is to

<sup>1</sup> Published fortnightly. Annual subscription 8s. May be ordered in Great Britain through the Christian News-Letter.



build on shifting sands. It was believed in former generations that between man's sin and God's holiness lies a gulf which only God can bridge, and that He has bridged that gulf in the life of Christ and his death on the Cross. Through sharing in that self-sacrifice we find the power to act towards our fellow men as we wish them to act towards us. This power begins when we are honest with ourselves and with one another. Such honesty is the foundation of marriage and of the Christian home, which is the cement of our national life. It points the way of advance for our national education. It is the love of God and of our fellow men which gives meaning and sanity to industry and trade. The purpose of industry is to apply the skill of man to the raw materials of the earth so as to meet human need. The purpose of trade is to make possible the distribution of goods and services to the place where the need is greatest. The function of money is to facilitate trade. The pursuit of money as a means to power is one of the chief idolatries which has brought the world to its present distress. From the same love of God and of our fellow men, will come the wisdom to rebuild our cities after the war is over in such manner that all our citizens may have light and air and convenient homes with quick access to their work and a share in the life of nature. We shall also find the courage to use our homes, our work, our land and our whole national heritage not as vested interests but for the common good. Finally, the war is teaching us that the whole world is a unit in which the needs of each can be met only by taking into consideration the needs of all. To restrain aggression is a Christian obligation ; to take revenge never. Justice and mercy towards man, humility towards God—these are the foundations of order. By these the twin evils of war and unemployment can be abolished. In such a centre as Manchester, with its world wide commercial connections, these foundations can be laid.

## BOMBING

Bombing policy has always seemed to me the danger point at which this country might, largely unawares, cross the narrow dividing line between waging a just war for a righteous cause and the immoral infliction of indiscriminate and meaningless slaughter.

For those who take up arms in what they believe to be a just cause military counter-measures in the most effective form are not only legitimate but a duty. To accept war and to wage it with less than the maximum vigour is mere weakness and inefficiency ; there is nothing Christian about a divided mind. In judging of what is done in war, moreover, we must not overlook the fact that fighting, and particularly fighting in the air, is often an adventurous and exciting business. The statements in which young airmen describe the exploits in which they engage with dauntless courage have to be read in the context of the thrill of battle ; they are not deliberate ethical judgments, though few airmen probably are unaware that there are ethical issues involved.

But even when the ground has been cleared to this extent, the question of bombing will not allow our conscience to rest. There have been utterances of some of our leaders and frequent expressions of opinion in the press, which seem to assume, if they do not explicitly demand, that we should behave exactly as the Nazis do. The question about which we have to make up our minds is put very clearly in a report of a raid into Germany which appeared not long ago in a leading London daily. I quote it for this reason and not to give exaggerated importance to an individual utterance.

"The moment we got into Germany some of the lads began blowing off everything they had. One of us set a cornfield ablaze. We machine-gunned a mansion. We fired at everything moving we saw." "It's a dirty way of fighting, this machine-gunning," said one sober voice, "but——." "Aw hell, I sort of felt the R.A.F. was over and they had better know it."

Are bombing and machine-gunning to be directed to "everything moving" ? Children, for example ? Or is this a "dirty business," with which we may not soil our hands ? That seems to me the crucial issue. I hear of discussions, both among civilians and in the services, in which the killing of children, and of the mothers who produce them,



is justified on the ground that if German children grow up, they would only bring fresh horrors on Europe. It will interest some of you to know (as we are reminded in an instructive article on "Reprisals" in the September number of *Theology*)<sup>1</sup> that the same question was debated in the sixteenth century. The answer then given to it was that (1) you may not do evil that good may come, (2) it is not right to punish a sin which is only feared but not yet committed, (3) there are other ways of preventing children from doing mischief when they grow up. Are we going to go back on that?

The justification of this war is that it is in essence a large-scale police measure—an attempt to maintain a true order against anarchy and tyranny. But if that is what it really is, then, as in all police measures, greater violence must not be used than is necessary to achieve the purpose in view. To go beyond that is murder. Policemen and soldiers can in the exercise of their calling commit murder and, if they do, are liable to punishment. Neither the justice of our cause nor the crimes of the Nazis are a justification for committing murder.

Can you see how much hinges on maintaining the distinction? As the editor of *Theology* says in the same September number, "when it is extremely difficult to draw a clear line between right and wrong, there is a strong temptation not to draw a line anywhere, whereas in fact it is all the more important to draw a line somewhere."

In a book I read recently I was struck by a passage describing the immortal achievement of Grotius in the seventeenth century in his attempt to systematise international law. In an age of the fiercest wars, when all norms were disregarded, he succeeded in impressing on his contemporaries the idea of the reign of law—law that was not to be set aside or flouted even in time of war. The idea of Christendom had broken down, but Grotius implanted in men's minds a sense of the spiritual unity of western civilisation. On the basis of the Christian moral tradition he brought about in Europe a spiritual solidarity of the reason which served for a time as a substitute for the disrupted solidarity of faith. Is it not our business as Christians to take up the task afresh to-day and, precisely in face of the degrading influences of war, set to work to lay moral foundations for a true international order?

#### C.N-L. No. 88

Our mail-bag often contains pleasant surprises. One such is a recent letter from my friend Professor Rosenstock-Huessy in America. He is a distinguished historian, the author among other works of a brilliant study of European history entitled *Out of Revolution*. He is not only an eminent scholar but a person of dynamic energy. When I first met him before the Hitler revolution he was engaged in running camps in Germany for students and workers. He refers in his letter to a camp that has been started in America, named after William James because its purpose is to discover, in the phrase which he made famous, a "moral equivalent for war." What has greatly encouraged me is that what I wrote in the News-Letter about the faith which can deliver society from its present predicament should find a deep echo in another continent among a group that is exceptionally alive and has learned what it means not only in theory but in experience and action. The letter says:

"Many a time did I read News-Letter 88 to friends and specially to Camp William James. That you should have written down the creed that has knitted together our Camp here 3,000 miles away during the last year, sounds fantastic. Yet it is literally true. We have accepted your text (which is now mimeographed) as the best expression of our growth, beginning with the lack of programme. We have discovered daily new spiritual resources and therefore enlarged our activities. We have an outpost in Mexico, another in Alaska, and serve the New England farmers in their labour shortage. I like to think that the number 88 is a good omen, of 1588 and 1688 nature. I would like to see a work service group of Americans and Canadians to be formed in England with English, exactly as Christian News-Letter 88 demands. We don't believe in

<sup>1</sup> S.P.C.K., Northumberland Avenue, London, W.C.2. 1s. per copy, 12s. per annum.



'post-war' actions. Peaces are made in wars. And the abandonment of all intellectual exchanges between U.S.A. and Great Britain (scholarships were stopped) is a real catastrophe which we are not going to accept without resistance."

You will be interested to know that steps have been taken by friends of Professor Rosenstock-Huessy in this country to see whether effect can be given to the suggestion he makes.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Nothing that has appeared in the one hundred issues of the News-Letter has evoked a greater response than the Supplement "Pater Noster," for which the demand has exceeded 35,000 copies. It was Dr. J. O. F. Murray who a year ago (C.N-L. No. 52) made the suggestion, which led to the preparation of the Supplement, that members of the News-Letter might be united by a common link of prayer, and that those who wished to strengthen this tie might train themselves in the use of the Lord's Prayer with this special intention. Some of you will be glad to have your attention called to a small handbook interpreting the Lord's Prayer, which Dr. Murray, whose mind has been occupied with this subject for many years, has just published.<sup>1</sup>

## A PRAYER FOR THE LAND

One of our members, who has felt the need of prayer for the land and for all who are engaged in agriculture, has sent me the following prayer :—

"We beseech thee, gracious Lord God, to remember thy servants in all country places who labour to cultivate and make fertile the land. Give them in all times a patient and reverent devotion to their high calling. Strengthen them with hope to meet all the hazards, trials and frustrations of war and weather. Bless their labour with fruitfulness. Refresh their toil with thy goodness.

"Almighty and all loving Lord who hast given for our use the kindly fruits of the earth that we may enjoy them, grant us, with minds that worship thee, to realize our dependence upon these thy gifts. Give us a deep sense of our stewardship. May we labour to cultivate the earth with hope and humility, with enterprise and energy, without grudging and without greed. Make us good neighbours one of another. Stir up in us a kindly management and understanding of all beasts and birds, domestic and wild, among whom we work, remembering that by thy hand we and they and the whole earth were and are created. Amen."

Yours sincerely,

*J. H. Oldham*

<sup>1</sup> *The Origin and Meaning of the Lord's Teaching in Prayer.* The Central Readers Board, Abbey House, Westminster, S.W.1. 6d.

---

**Subscriptions**—The rate of subscription to the News-Letter is 12s. 6d. (\$3.0 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year, and 6s. 6d. (\$1.50 in U.S.A. and Canada) for six months. Back numbers—4d. each, 1s. 2d. for 6, 1s. 11d. for 12 copies. Post free.

*All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—*

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, ARLOSH HALL, MANSFIELD ROAD, OXFORD.